



# DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

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## HOMOSEXUAL CONCERNS FOCUS OF CONSULTATION

WASHINGTON -- "Ministry with the Gay and Lesbian Community" was the focus of a five-day consultation at the College of Preachers here, Dec. 15-19.

"The Church is not just talking, but actually doing something about its ministry to and with the homosexual community," emphasized the Rt. Rev. Elliott L. Sorge, Executive for Mission and Ministry at the Episcopal Church Center in New York, as he expressed gratitude to the College for the event on the opening night.

The staff of 12 and the 30 other participants represented a full spectrum of sexual orientation, including chiefly non-gay Episcopal clergy already ministering with lesbians and gays. Participants and staff represented 26 dioceses from both rural and metropolitan settings and many came sponsored by their bishops.

The program aimed at clarifying and demonstrating authentic ministry with the lesbian and gay community. Gerald G. May, M.D., discussed the general relationship between sexuality and spirituality. Professor Beverly Harrison of Union Theological Seminary and the Rev. Carter Heyward of the Episcopal Divinity School heightened the connection of social justice issues as they affect various minorities, especially women, blacks and gays.

The Rev. Grant Gallup preached about Advent as Christ's great "coming out" to affirm all persons. The Rev. Richard Younge, Episcopal chaplain at the University of Washington, addressed biblical issues and the Rev. Canon Clinton Jones of Hartford addressed the concerns of "minorities within the minority," namely, transexuals and others. The Rev. Alison Cheek, a psychotherapist, discussed the Church's new strictures against ordaining lesbians and gays.

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Coordinators for the consultation were the Rev. Barry Evans, director of program for the College, and John Fortunato, a psychotherapist in Washington. Others on the staff included the Bishop of Utah, the Rt. Rev. Otis Charles; Dr. Louie Crew, founder of Integrity, the ministry of lesbian and gay male Episcopalians; and the Rev. John Rettger, official chaplain to Integrity/Twin Cities, as appointed by the Bishop of Minnesota.

Mutuality was a major concern of the structures and the substance of the consultation. Non-gays and gays shared in all aspects of the programming from the inception of the consultation onward. Authentic ministry was perceived as ministry "with," not just "to," the other.

Bishop Charles said after the conference: "As a participant, I experienced a powerful awareness of the Church's conscious and unconscious oppression of those who are gay or lesbian, or women in general; of our exclusion of baptized sisters and brothers from the full experience of themselves within the Body of Christ; and of the truth that when my sister or brother is diminished or in pain, I too suffer pain and diminishment. I hope that many such conferences will be held in provinces and dioceses of the Church, so that we can discover together the fullness of life in Christ."

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